

RECOGNIZING MEGAN N. WORTHMAN OF THE FOURTH DISTRICT OF COLORADO FOR WINNING THE VETERAN OF FOREIGN WARS 2004 VOICE OF DEMOCRACY BROADCAST SCRIPTWRITING CONTEST

HON. MARILYN N. MUSGRAVE

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 20, 2004

Mrs. MUSGRAVE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor all of America's veterans who have served our country for the cause of freedom. The Veterans of Foreign Wars is a fine organization that deserves our praise for striving to instill an understanding of responsibility to country. This year, more than 80,000 secondary school students participated in the Voice of Democracy audio/essay competition designed to give high school students the opportunity to voice their opinion on their responsibility to our country. The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and its Ladies Auxiliary selected the theme "My Commitment to America's Future" for this year's annual contest.

I am pleased to announce that Ms. Megan N. Worthman from the Fourth District of Colorado won the 2004 Voice of Democracy broadcast scriptwriting contest for this year. Her work exemplifies excellence and is worthy of recognition. It is inspiring to see such commitment to America in a young person, and I applaud her fine work.

Her essay reads as follows:

2003-2004 VFW VOICE OF DEMOCRACY SCHOLARSHIP CONTEST—"MY COMMITMENT TO AMERICA'S FUTURE"

When I was about 7 years old, my grandfather gave me his Naval uniform. I listened to him for hours recounting his journeys in the Pacific. Although he was a radio operator and never saw action, I loved that he lived in such an important time, and he was sharing his experiences with me. When he gave me his thick blue World War II uniform, I was so excited. He gave me a very important piece of him, and I was proud to wear a part of American history. That same pride reflected in his eyes as I tried it on. Of course it was way too big for me, the bottom hem brushing on the floor, the sleeves well past my fingertips, and his hat falling down over my eyes and resting on my nose. That uniform is still too big for me, but I hope to grow into it. I know I will never fit into it physically, but I will grow into its image, to become a better person, and a better American.

My commitment is to become that American who embodies the image laid out over two centuries, to become the American that so many others died for. When I was in grade school, about second or third grade, I became really interested in World War II, and the history of my country. I also started to learn about the principles that were the foundation of this country. Later on in fourth grade, I had set my sights on the Air Force Academy, or at least measure up to the high standard they have. To be one of the few who can give all they possess to their country. Now, my goal is to uphold the Constitution and teach my family and those around me the morals and values that have defined America for so long. I am, and will become a more complete person and start to fit into that uniform.

Good Americans are those who work hard for what they believe in, and respect all

those trying to accomplish the same. Even today, as a young High School student, I practice the Constitutional rights entitled to myself and those around me. Everyone has an opinion and the natural right to let it be heard. Everyone also has a different background and heritage, and should be respected for it, no matter what. I will give my time and resources to others who cannot support themselves because it is my obligation. I have the privilege of family, health and happiness. Because of these gifts, I will help others find and button up their own tailored uniforms.

"We hold these truths to be self evident that all men are created equal." That is my commitment. These words echoed through Independence Hall over 200 years ago and were very important to the early framers of our nation. These words make me realize that my commitment is no small one; I will give all of me to my country and my fellow Americans.

Other Americans have set the standard, the uniform, for all of us to grow into. Other Americans have given their lives for a few words written on a piece of paper two centuries ago. The least I can do is to uphold those values and pass them on. It is my duty and my commitment to go to school and learn about the people who influenced our ideas and values of today. The people who gave their lives for life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, and to learn about those who tried to take it away. It is my duty to learn about my neighbor and other cultures. The great thinker Voltaire said, "I might not agree with what you have to say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it." This held true many years ago, and still holds enormous value today. It is important to learn from the past, other cultures and other people. When I graduate high school and finish college, suddenly the hem on my uniform seems farther from the ground.

When I volunteer my time to my community, or help my little brother with his homework, my fingers appear at the ends of my sleeves. When I listen to both sides of the argument, my hat fits a little better. When I become a better person by reading, volunteering, teaching and learning, I start to mature and fill out the uniform. When I respect all people, when I learn about foreign cultures, my commitment begins to show and becomes a beacon for others to see.

Everyone has a different uniform. For some, it could be a military one. For others, it could be a business suit, a doctor's smock, an athletic uniform or a construction jacket. However, everyone's uniform is made of the same materials; commitment, hard work, love, respect and time. Everyone's uniform is intertwined with everyone else's, and if one of us is missing, the fabric of America cannot be whole. Everyone has an important role to play, and I intend to do my part to succeed in whatever my role may be. My commitment is a lifelong one, and it seeded when I was 7, listening to another American recount his experiences.

INTRODUCING THE DISCHARGED COMBAT VETERANS MEDICAL CARE EXTENSION ACT

HON. RAHM EMANUEL

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 20, 2004

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Discharged Combat Veterans Medical Care Extension Act. I offer this legislation with the distinguished gentleman from Il-

linois, Mr. Evans, the senior Democrat on the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, and 13 other original cosponsors.

Our bill would extend from two years to five years the time in which combat veterans may receive free care from VA medical facilities without having to document that their illnesses are the result of their military service. The legislation will also allow more time for medical assessments and data analysis for the returning veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The lack of scientific knowledge regarding the relationship between military deployment and long-term health often hinders the VA's ability to establish the required connection between service and health consequences. Although the current two-year period allows for the collection of some health information, symptoms resulting from deployment may remain hidden until years later, as demonstrated by illnesses related to service during the Persian Gulf War.

VA physicians have never treated many types of the severe brain injuries, facial trauma or illnesses from exposure to dangerous substances that result from service in Iraq and Afghanistan. Therefore, additional time is needed to stabilize, diagnose and treat those injuries and illnesses.

We made a promise to our veterans to care for them after they returned from war. Accordingly, our troops returning from Iraq and Afghanistan deserve open access to VA medical facilities as they heal from injuries and as their service-connected illnesses begin to appear.

As this Memorial Day approaches, Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the Discharged Combat Veterans Medical Care Extension Act. This bill will go a long way toward helping our veterans recover and entitle them to the care they deserve for their valor and service to our nation.

INTRODUCTION OF GUAM WAGE PARITY BILL

HON. MADELEINE Z. BORDALLO

OF GUAM

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 20, 2004

Ms. BORDALLO. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing legislation to correct an anomaly in the treatment of the Federal blue-collar workforce in Guam by providing for parity in their wage schedules and rates. These are the wage schedules issued under the Federal Wage System, the uniform pay-setting system Congress established by law in 1972 for Federal "prevailing rate employees" who are paid based upon an hourly rate (P.L. 92-392).

Administered by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), the Federal Wage System is designed to ensure that pay rates for Federal trade, craft, and laboring employees are in line with prevailing levels of pay for comparable levels of work in the private sector within a local wage area. The system is also meant to eliminate inequities that would otherwise occur within the Federal Government and between the various agencies employing citizens in a local wage area.

OPM has designated the Department of Defense (DoD) as the lead agency for establishing the pay rates and issuing all wage schedules. OPM has currently defined 131 appropriated fund and 125 non-appropriated fund

local wage areas within the 50 States, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. Schedules and rates are developed for each wage area based upon a survey conducted by DoD. OPM regulation however provides that a separate schedule shall be issued for Guam with rates identical to those used for prevailing rate employees in foreign areas. Regulation also provides that the rates for foreign areas shall be an average of all wage area rates set by OPM for the United States. Under these circumstances, the prevailing rate employees in Guam are treated no differently in terms of their pay rates than if they were working in a foreign area (outside the United States). This is a matter of concern to me which I am seeking to address with the introduction of this legislation.

Guam's unique economic conditions, given its geographical isolation and the fact that it is a high cost of living area, have placed the hard working prevailing rate employees in Guam at an unfair disadvantage when compared to those that are employed in an OPM-defined local wage area. Hawaii, Alaska, and Puerto Rico, unlike Guam, are each currently defined to be their own separate wage areas and benefit from wage schedules that take into account their economic situation and cost of living environment. Guam should be treated no differently and have a wage schedule that reflects the cost of living and the level of pay for government-wage-grade-equivalent jobs in the private sector.

Therefore I have introduced this bill to provide equitable treatment for Guam, not by directing OPM to establish a separate wage area for Guam but by simply applying the same rates used for the State of Hawaii, which sustains a similar island economy with most comparable trades and blue-collar workforces.

It is generally understood that the reason Guam has been issued a separate schedule each year by regulation and has not been defined as a separate wage area, is that the number of comparable positions in Guam's private industry may be insufficient under the current standards to warrant its own wage survey and designation as a separate wage area. In passing the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2002, Congress required DoD, when establishing wage schedules and rates for prevailing rate employees, to consider rates paid for comparable positions in private industry in the nearest wage area that is most similar to the wage area for which wage rates are being established when there are insufficient positions in the local industry upon which to establish wage schedules and rates (Sec. 1113 of P.L. 107-107). The legislation I am introducing today is consistent with this intent.

This bill would greatly enhance the economic viability of the prevailing rate employees in Guam, is in the public interest, and is, in my opinion, in conformance with the goal of the Federal Wage System. This is a sensible policy proposal that would ensure regional equity in wage rates. I look forward to working with OPM, DoD, the House Committee on Government Reform, and the House Committee on Armed Services, in addressing the concern over the current inequity and treatment of Guam under the Federal Wage System that this bill seeks to correct.

IN SUPPORT OF H.R. 775

HON. MARSHA BLACKBURN

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 20, 2004

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, many of our immigration laws are no longer consistent with our national security and other vital interests.

The diversity visa or visa lottery system is one such example. The visa lottery was established by the Immigration Act of 1990 to offer the opportunity of immigration to individuals in countries that had been sending few immigrants to the United States.

Usually, immigrant visas are issued to foreign nationals that have an existing connection with a family member lawfully residing in the United States or with a U.S. employer. These types of relationships help ensure that immigrants entering the country have a stake in continuing America's success, and have the advanced skills necessary to contribute to the nation's economy. However, under the visa lottery program, visas are awarded to immigrants at random with no such safety precautions.

I have heard from immigrants who have legally come to the country, and they believe the visa lottery program is unfair to immigrants who comply with the United States' immigration laws. Also, the visa lottery program does not prohibit illegal aliens from applying to receive a visa through the program.

The program has many flaws. A recent report released by the Center for Immigration Studies shows that it is commonplace for foreign nationals to apply for the lottery program multiple times using different aliases and false personal information.

I support Congressman Goodlatte's bill, H.R. 775, The Security and Fairness Enhancement for America Act, which would terminate the visa lottery. This piece of legislation is an important and positive step in immigration reform and it is my hope that the House considers it in the near future.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE GIRLS SOFTBALL TEAM OF ALEXANDRIA HIGH SCHOOL

HON. MIKE ROGERS

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 20, 2004

Mr. ROGERS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Girls Softball Team of Alexandria High School in Calhoun County, Alabama. On May 15, 2004, these young ladies won the 4-A Girls Softball State Championship.

Congratulations to Amy Brown, Whitney Burt, Stevie Smith, Hollie Henderson, Allie Barker, Anna Pitts, Lindy Baird, Whitney Hurst, Haley Henderson, Hali Lash, Jordan Brown and Alyssa Brown. Thanks to Coaches Brian Hess and Toni Duncan for their leadership and the support of Manager Sara Borders and Bookkeeper Donya Barker.

I know that Calhoun County, Alabama, and the entire Third District share with me their best wishes for this accomplishment. Only through hard work, dedication and a team ef-

fort could this be achieved. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

COMMEMORATING THE 63RD ANNI- VERSARY OF THE BATTLE OF CRETE

HON. CAROLYN B. MALONEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 20, 2004

Ms. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mark the 63rd anniversary of the Battle of Crete. Last year, I introduced H. Res. 244 which recognizes and appreciates the historical significance of the people of Crete during World War II.

This is a historic event with direct significance to the Allies' victory of World War II. On May 20, 1941, thousands of German paratroopers and gliders began landing on Crete. Both the Allies and Nazis wanted Crete because of its strategic location. At that time the British controlled the island. It was a very strong point on the lifeline to India and protected both Palestine and Egypt.

The Nazi invasion force included the elite German paratroopers and glider troops. Hitler felt this was to be an easy victory, yet he is quoted to have said shortly after the invasion, "France fell in 8 days. Why is Crete free?"

The invasion of Crete took 11 days. It resulted in more than 6,000 German troops listed as killed, wounded or missing in action. The losses to the elite 7th parachute division were felt so hard by the German Military it signified the end of large-scale airborne operations.

This valiant fight by the Cretan people began in the first hour of the Nazi airborne invasion, in contrast to the European underground movements that took a year or more after being invaded to activate.

Young boys, old men and women displayed breathtaking bravery in defending their Crete. German soldiers never got used to Cretan women fighting them. They would tear the dress from the shoulders of suspected women to find bruises from the recoil of the rifle. The penalty was death.

The Times (London) July 28, 1941, reported that "five hundred Cretan women have been deported to Germany for taking part in the defense of their native island."

Another surprise for the German soldiers who invaded Crete was the heroic resistance of the clergy. A priest leading his parishioners into battle was not what the Germans anticipated. At Paleochora, Father Stylianos Frantzeskis, hearing of the German airborne invasion, rushed to his church, sounded the bell, took his rifle and marched his volunteers toward Maleme to write history.

This struggle became an example for all Europe to follow in defying German occupation and aggression.

The price paid by the Cretans for their valiant resistance to Nazi forces was high. Thousands of civilians died from random executions, starvation, and imprisonment. Entire communities were burned and destroyed by the Germans as a reprisal for the Cretan resistance movement. Yet this resistance lasted for four years.

The battle of Crete was to change the final outcome of World War II. The Battle of Crete